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**Annual Meeting  
and EXPO**  
November 11-14  
San Francisco, California

# SAT-A09    OVERSTORY, UNDERSTORY SHAPING URBAN FORESTS TO SUSTAIN COMMUNITIES IN PHILADELPHIA AND CAMBRIDGE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

Following urban forest plans for Cambridge, Massachusetts and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, this conversation takes up environmental justice, policy innovation, urban design, and management. Special emphasis falls on how people perceive trees – leveraging data analysis and innovative engagement strategies to shape a new relationship between the city, its people, and its trees.

### Learning Objectives

1. Understand urban forest pathologies that are common and likely occurring in your community too
2. Recognize urban forest issues and interests that are unique to your community
3. Develop tools that efficiently provide comprehensive data on urban forest condition and risk
4. Gather new strategies for engaging communities in discussions about the perception of trees in the urban environment, and understand how to use those to create room for change

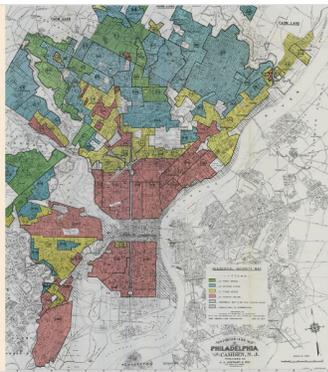
# Philly Tree Plan

**Mission:** To establish a 10 year strategic plan for the planting and care of the urban forest, guided by values of environmental justice, community engagement, and sustainability.



Supported by William Penn Foundation, TD Bank, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Knight Foundation

**Segregated housing and the practice of redlining meant removing investment from communities on the basis of race.**



## THE CRISIS OF CANOPY

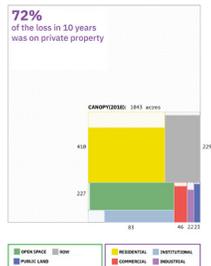
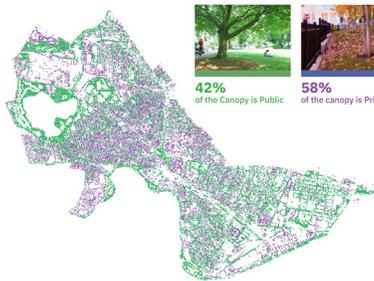
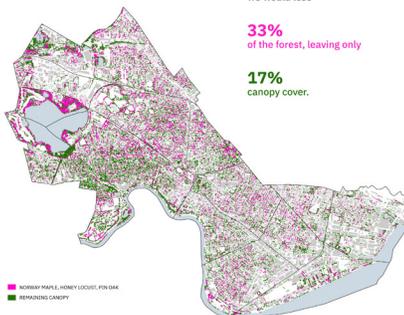
The urban forest of today is a product of historical decisions and ecological processes at work over time. But the inequity of canopy distribution is felt today and is likely to be exacerbated in the future without action.

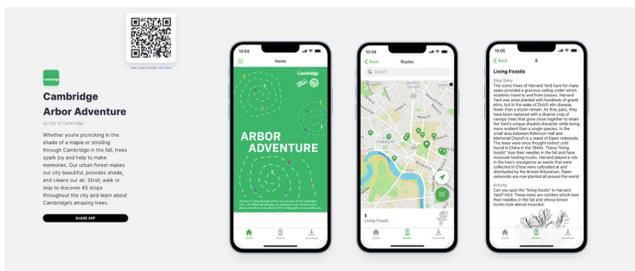
- Canopy cover, condition, and climate risks
- Shade equity and the lasting impacts of redlining and urban disinvestment
- Urban heat island and its impact on vulnerable populations
- Role of the tree Inventories and developing an approach to managing all the data
- Quantifying and Qualifying the Challenge of maintaining and growing canopy cover



If three species faced something like Dutch Elm Disease, we would lose

**33%** of the forest, leaving only **17%** canopy cover.





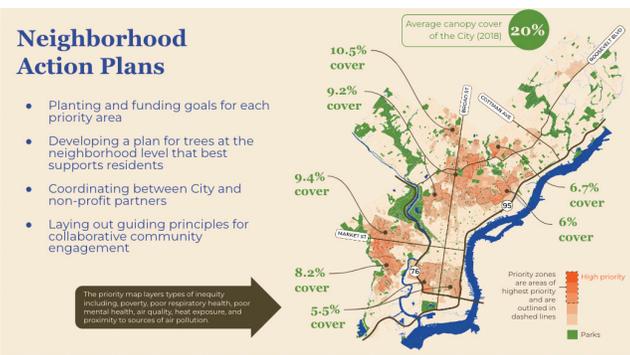
### WHOSE URBAN FOREST?

Engaging communities in productive discussions about the past and future urban forest is a challenge for many reasons. Reaching the communities most impacted by the lack of canopy is a priority though can be difficult. While most people value trees in the city, how to activate people around preserving and planting trees requires targeted, nuanced, and persistent efforts.



- Collaborating and communicating with the community
- The challenges of diverse representation
- Digital Surveys
- Task force / representational models
- Targeting audiences and less represented communities
- Priority mapping as basis for engagement focus
- Deploying multiple engagement strategies
- Community voices steering committees
- Neighborhood Ambassadors
- Walk-shops
- Visual storytelling
- Digital Open houses
- City-wide photography IG challenge

**Philly Tree Plan survey in 9 different languages**



## PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

Systemic change requires a range of strategies and tactical interventions guided by overarching principles that express a clear and compelling value proposition. Cities agencies, community institutions, and local residents all need to be activated in ways that impact planning, design, policy and the management of the urban forest.

- Street Diets and reconceived public rights of way
- Alternatives to the evenly spaced street tree
- Changes in policy
- Improvements in maintenance and operations
- Soils management plans
- Citizen action organizations
- Reducing resident burdens
- Public communications and ongoing involvement

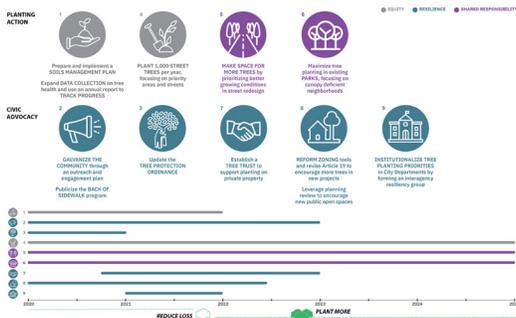
## THE YEARS AHEAD

The urban forest is a dynamic system. In order to drive and evaluate progress, urban forest plans have to be living and dynamic as well.

- Multiple formats (Technical reporting, action plans, and public outreach)
- Annual Reporting and Regular Data gathering
- Tree report card based on 8 goal metric
- Measuring health and ecosystem services impact
- Celebration



### FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN



## PANELISTS



**ALEXA BOSSE, AIA**

Alexa Bosse is a registered architect and founding principal of Hinge Collective, a public interest design firm focused on bringing the power of design to all people. With master's degrees in both architecture and landscape architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and professional experience working across design disciplines and both non-profit and private sectors, Alexa has honed her skills as a convener and a facilitator to realize ambitious community-driven projects. Alexa has taught graduate and undergraduate level studios focusing on public interest design at The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Design, Jefferson University, and Drexel University.



**ERIC KRAMER, FASLA**

Eric's work focuses on what landscapes communicate to and about their communities – whether cherished memories, bold aspirations, or contested histories. A writer and teacher, Eric's approach to practice is rooted equally in basic research and applied design thinking. Over the last two decades, he has guided the renewal and enrichment of numerous campuses, cultural institutions, and urban districts, including The Clark Art Institute, Boston's Central Wharf, Duke University's student life precinct, and a comprehensive interpretive plan for The Alamo in San Antonio. Blending research and practice, his interest in urban soils and trees has led to numerous publications and informed the Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan, which he led. Notable current projects include a framework plan for the University of Pennsylvania's Morris Arboretum and the historic Eugenia Williams House in Knoxville, TN.



**SAHAR COTON-HARDY**

Sahar Coston-Hardy is a fine art and landscape architecture photographer focused on the social structure of race and cultural identity. Integrating portraiture, urban design, and street photography, her work investigates the relationship between place, power, and personhood. Sahar is a 2020 Women Photograph + Nikon Grant recipient for her collaborative project, documenting historically significant structures and spaces by examining the landscape of resilience and struggle. Sahar is a contributing editor to Landscape Architecture Magazine and has lectured widely on urban design photography. Along with photographing the built environment, she collaborates with design teams through community engagement from a visual storytelling lens. Sahar photographed Dumbarton Oaks for the publication, *Garden as Art: Beatrix Farrand at Dumbarton Oaks*, which features essays and photographs of "this remarkable landscape as a living and breathing work of art."